FEATURES

Celebrating Black history and culture with art, reflection, and community

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Amanda Lewis, president of Winchester ABC, addresses attendees of the inaugural Black History and Culture Celebration on Feb. 25 at the Griffin Museum of Photography. COURTESY PHOTO/NETWORK FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE & WINCHESTER ABC

The following was submitted by the Network for Social Justice:

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The Winchester community came together last week at the Griffin Museum of Photography for the inaugural Black History and Culture Celebration, an evening filled with music, student creativity, and powerful messages about equity, unity, and the enduring legacy of Black history.

Left, Prize winner WHS senior Dawson English and Kurt Heisler, representing the Rotary Club of Winchester, at the celebration. Right, Contest prize winner WHS sophomore Max Apostadero delivering his poem at the event. COURTESY PHOTOS/NETWORK FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE & WINCHESTER ABC

Winchester High School senior Carson Sarpong, president of WHS's Black Student Union, is the leader behind this new Black History Month initiative.

On Feb. 25, Carson reflected on the 100th anniversary of Black History Month and acknowledged it was this pivotal anniversary that sparked his idea for the student contest and celebration.

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Black History Month has evolved from a week-long observance into a nationally recognized month celebrating Black contributions across all facets of society.

Contest prize winning art by Sarah Fromm. COURTESY PHOTO/NETWORK FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE WINCHESTER ABC

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Last November, Carson reached out to Rebecca Slisz, executive director of the Network for Social Justice, and proposed a Black History Project with this rationale: "*Both we in the Black Student Union and our peers have limited knowledge on the vast African cultures that span from the shores of Brazil to Japan, and even less knowledge about our own African American culture here in the United States. It seems imperative that something must be done to fill this gap.*"

With National History Day as a model, the BSU students conceived and documented details of the Black History Project contest. They invited peers to submit projects that would ultimately be judged by WHS teachers.

Award-winning poet, educator, and equity leader jamele adams, left, with members of the Winchester High School Black Student Union. COURTESY PHOTO/NETWORK FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE & WINCHESTER ABC

At Wednesday's event at the Griffin, attendees gathered in the main gallery to look at student art including photography and a contest submi

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WHS junior Sarah Fromm, listen to WHS senior Dawson English speak

about The Cleveland Summit, a transformative event of Black Athlete Activism, and hear WHS sophomore Max Apostadero deliver an unforgettable rendition of his poem The Count Keeps Adding.

Visitors could also read the essay submitted by WHS junior Emma Russo entitled Sampling as Cultural Preservation: The Influence of Black Music on Contemporary Artists.

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The audience welcomed award-winning poet, educator, and equity leader jamele adams — also known by his artistic moniker *Harlym 1Two5*. adams is renowned for his ability to bring unity and healing in schools and communities following racial incidents using a framework he developed built on principles of Love Inclusion and Trust, or LIT. adams delivered a compelling keynote filled with passion and purpose.

Adams will return to Winchester on Thursday, March 12 for a workshop on Conversations, not Confrontations, from 6-8 p.m. at the Winchester Unitarian Society. The workshop is free, registrations are required here.

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The WHS student band performs during the Black History Celebration on Feb. 25. COURTESY PHOTO/NETWORK FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE & WINCHESTER ABC

Emcee Zahara Pless kept Wednesday's program on schedule, introducing each speaker and their role in the event. Amanda Lewis, president of Winchester A Better Chance, offered her remarks and welcomed guests into the spirit of learning and celebration.

Kurt Heisler, representing the Rotary Club of Winchester, awarded prizes to student contest winners. Awards ranged from $250 for first place to $50 for fourth place, acknowledging creativity and thoughtful engagement with Black history and culture.

Rebecca Slisz, representing the Network for Social Justice, spoke about Creative Learning Haven, an initiative of WHS 2018 graduate Lulu Tian to set up libraries and learning centers in refugee camps in Uganda. Slisz emphasized the importance of spaces that encourage artistic exp
multicultural learning, and student empowerment.

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Rebecca Slisz, representing the Network for Social Justice, speaks at the celebration on Feb. 25. COURTESY PHOTO/NETWORK FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE & WINCHESTER ABC

Throughout the evening, a talented band of Winchester High Sch students and alumni played music that resonated with the theme event.

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Attendees were encouraged to mingle with one another, enjoy the music and the Griffin's Manifest Destiny exhibition (hanging through March 15), chat with Winchester resident Vince Dixon and learn about his *Short History of African American Culture*, and appreciate the Black Student Union's hard work and successful Black Culture Celebration.

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By Talia Ho | Correspondent Fame. Fortune. And all that jazz. This spring, Winchester High School presents "Chicago: Teen Edition," a bold musical that explores celebrity culture, media manipulation, and

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Winchester residents share more snow photos

Well, Winchester, we made it through the weekend with only a coating of snow that amounted to nothing on Sunday afternoon. But during the Feb. 22-23 bli
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to send their snow photos. And here is what

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the cost of ambition. This iconic production is set in the 1920s. Performances will take place on March 13 and 14

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Winchester Community Music School set to expand, upgrade

The big events in Winchester Community Music School always take place in Nichols Performance Hall. With the school and its performances' growing in popularity, the hall and many of its amenities are due for an upgrade. The performance hall is one of the main areas that the school seeks to

TAVISHI CHATTOPADHYAY | CORRESPONDENT

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Winchester Foundation for Educational Excellence hosting 23rd Trivia Bee

Winchester's brightest fifth graders and adults will gather soon to compete in a fierce trivia competition that will raise money for Winchester schools. The Winchester Foundation for Educational Excellence (WFEE), a nonprofit that provides grants for Winchester's public schools, will host its 23rd annual trivia bee March 11

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Celebrate Women's History Month with Girls Leading Change

The following was submitted by the Network for Social Justice: To mark Women's History Month and International Women's Day in 2026, the Network for Social Justice is collaborating with club leaders from Winchester High School and members of the Community Health team from La Colaborativa in Chelsea and

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Winchester School Committee candidates bring contrasting backgrounds to Thursday forum

Two candidates for Winchester's School Committee will face voters at a forum as the district navigates a new literacy curriculum, budget pressures and questions about student mental health. Heather von Mering and John Bellaire are competing for an open seat on the School Committee, which oversees a budget von

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By Talia Ho | Correspondent Fame. Fortune. And all that jazz. This spring, Winchester

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Ripley Chapel in Winchester presents 'Syldason: You Are Welcome Here'

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The following was submitted by the Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church: On

High School presents “Chicago: Teen Edition,” a bold musical that explores celebrity culture, media manipulation, and the cost of ambition. This iconic production is set in the 1920s. Performances will take place on March 13 and 14

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Friday, March 13, beginning at 7:30 p.m., live in-person and live streamed from the stunning Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church, Winchester, 21 Church St., join in with Syldason, a duo concert featuring Sylvie Zakarian,

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